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CHAPTER XI

SOME SPECIAL SOCIAL PROBLEMS

ENOUGH HAS BEEN SAID of the housing congestion in normal times and of the great overcrowding arising from hostilities to indicate that Shanghai, despite its normal extensive industry and commerce, must contain many more persons than can find employment. There is a permanent problem of destitution, aggravated at some periods, slightly less perhaps at others, but always there. To the low-waged worker in Shanghai must be added the army of chronically unemployed and completely unemployable.

Recent studies of Shanghai dwell at length on the refugee problem following the outbreak of hostilities in 1937.[1] After five years, a hard core of refugees remained, despite consistent efforts in the spring months of 1939 and 1940 to disperse aggregations of those in "refugee camps." The Shanghai Refugee Relief Association, which was organised in 1938 to take over work formerly handled by the Shanghai International Red Cross Committee, continued till the middle of 1942 to collect and disburse funds for the support of approximately 15,000 refugees, a residue of old, young, invalid and unemployable.

In addition to those cared for in camps, hundreds of destitute persons roamed the streets after 1937, miserably clad, often in the final stages of exhaustion. The numbers increased considerably after December 1941. These aggravated Shanghai's permanent beggar problem. Begging is endemic in many Oriental countries. Especially at festival times in the vicinity of temples the lame, the halt, the sick and the blind display themselves to the pious who make pilgrimages, relying on pity and the belief that it is an act of virtue to dispense alms. Whether caused by hunger and want or engaged in as a chosen profession, begging is chronic.

Toward the end of 1940 the Shanghai Municipal Council, the Salvation Army and the Shanghai Rotary Club attempted to deal

[1] See particularly R. W. Barnett, *Economic Shanghai: Hostage to Politics*, Institute of Pacific Relations, New York, 1941.